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AUTHOR Edwards, B. T.
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ABSTRACT

This program examines the current acceleration of the decision-making cycle in the conduct of foreign policy due to the instantaneous reporting of events, called "The CNN Effect." The sometimes paradoxical consequences of global media coverage are noted, along with the examination of the medium of television itself, and its shortcomings in explaining complex events. The study guide offers questions to use before viewing the video, questions to follow the video, classroom activities to focus student thinking on the problem, topics for further research, and a list of seven resources. (EH)

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AMERICA'S DEFENSE MONITOR

Educational TV for the Classroom

ED 390 761

STUDY GUIDE FOR

" THE CNN EFFECT: " TV & FOREIGN POLICY

EPISODE #834

Produced by the Center for Defense Information

SP 035 635

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2

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"The CNN Effect:" TV & Foreign Policy

Advances in communications technology have led to pervasive television coverage of unfolding events around the world. The instantaneous reporting of these events -- especially conflicts and humanitarian crises -- can put pressure on policymakers to formulate quick responses. This acceleration of the decision-making cycle in the conduct of foreign policy has been dubbed "the CNN effect."

But foreign- and military-policy makers have also learned to use the power of instant communications to their advantage. In a crisis, the president can speak directly to a foreign leader-- and the world public -- via live television. Military commanders can manage the news media and regulate their access to combat zones in order to control the "look" of the war.

From Tiananmen Square to the Gulf War, from Bosnia to Somalia, ***"The CNN Effect:" TV & Foreign Policy*** examines the sometimes-paradoxical consequences of global media coverage. The show also looks at the medium of television itself, and its shortcomings in explaining complex events.

By becoming more aware of the role television plays in framing foreign and military policy, viewers will be better equipped to understand world events and participate in the democratic process.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

THIS PROGRAM FEATURES:

Peter Arnett	Correspondent, CNN
Marvin Kalb	Professor, Kennedy School of Goverment, Harvard University
Steve Livingston	Professor of Political Communications, George Washington University
Adm. Kendell Pease	Chief of Navy Information

BEFORE VIEWING QUESTIONS

1) How is the transmission of information increasing in speed in today's world?

2) How does the acceleration of information flow impact on foreign policy decision makers ?

3) Who do you think sets the foreign policy agenda today, politicians or the news media? (*And who sets <u>their</u> agendas*?)

4) Does television news provide a comprehensive view of foreign events?

AFTER VIEWING QUESTIONS

(Note: It may be useful to give these questions to students prior to viewing so that they will be more prepared to respond.)

1) Does the film itself present a certain viewpoint? If so, how would you describe this perspective?

2) Is "the CNN effect" entirely new, or is it a further development of a phenomenon that has been going on for a long time?

3) How has the military learned to exploit the power of the

"CNN effect" for its own advantage?

4) The impact of television news on foreign policy decision-making varies from case to case. Under what circumstances do you think TV images have the most impact? The least impact?

5) Why is "media management" considered essential in the conduct of foreign and military policy today? List some of the ways policy makers use the news media to promote their own agendas.

6) What are some of the differences between television coverage of current events and the reality of those events?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Research how communications technology is expected to change in the next decade or so -- computers, satellites, television, and so forth. How do you think this will change the role of the news reporter? How will it change the way foreign policy is conducted?

Have the class make a list of the effects of global instantaneous television coverage on the conduct of foreign policy. Which do you see as positive, and which do you see as negative? Does that often depend on whose point of view you're representing?

TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Watch a network evening news broadcast and write down a list of the stories on foreign events, along with the length of each report (use a watch with a second hand). The next day, look at a major newspaper's coverage of foreign events. Compare the number of stories and level of detail between the TV news broadcast and the newspaper. What are the advantages of TV news over newspapers? Of newspapers over TV news? How do the two complement each other?

RESOURCES

Hoge, Jr., James F.: "Media Pervasiveness," in *Foreign Affairs*, July/Aug. 1994, p. 136-144

Gowing, Nik: "Real-Time Television Coverage of Armed Conflicts and Diplomatic Crises: Does it Pressure or Distort Foreign Policy Decisions?", June 1994, Working Paper 94-1, Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University, (617) 495-8269, 111 pages.

"Impact of Television on U.S. Foreign Policy," House Foreign Affairs Cmte., 103rd Congress, second session, April 26, 1994, 53 pages.

Mowlana, Hamid et al, Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf-- A Global Perspective, (1992: Westview Press, Boulder, CO).

Stech, Frank J., "Winning CNN Wars," in *Parameters* -- Journal of the U.S. Army War College, Autumn 1994, p. 37-56.

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SG808 Media and the Images of War:

- *Have movies and television helped transmit from generation to generation a series of myths about war, peace, and the use of force?*

Guests include: Richard Slotkin (author).

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- *An all-star line up of journalist and military officers address questions of access, censorship, and the news media's role in past and future wars.*

Guests include: Walter Cronkite (CBS) and Peter Arnett (CNN).

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1500 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
or call 1-800-CDI-3334
Fax (202) 862-0708; email: cdi@igc.apc.org

This Study Guide compiled by B.T. Edwards.